



NAVY MED NAVIGATOR

Getting Comfortable on Comfort Augment crews arrive onboard

By JOSN Erica Mater
COMFORT Public Affairs

Headlining in world news...

President Bush has made it preparing to announce a plan for peace in the middle east. Bush says he is waiting for Palestine to appoint a new prime minister. The peace plan was drawn-up by the United States, Russia, the European Union and United Nations. The plan is a sequence of reforms and security agreements designed to move toward the creation of a separate Palestinian state. As of right now, the post of prime minister for Palestine does not have the power to control security issues or negotiating with Israel. Bush says for the plan to work, the prime minister must be empowered with "full authority."

A missing Utah girl was found Wednesday, nine months after her disappearance. Elizabeth Smart vanished from her Salt Lake City bedroom June 5, 2002. The 15-year old teenager was found in a town 20 miles south of her hometown. She was found walking down a street in Sandy, Utah with a Brian Mitchell and Wanda Barzee, who were all disguised, when the police confronted them. They currently have Mitchell and Barzee in custody but have made no charges.

In Navy news...

The U.S. Navy guided missile frigate, USS Gary (FFG 51), responded to a distress call from the motor vessel Captain Muhamadat about 5:30 p.m. local time yesterday (March 13), while conducting routine operations here.

The Captain Muhamad was taking on water in estimated six-foot seas, while the dhow was underway some 20 miles south of the Iranian coast in international waters. Once they arrived on scene, the Gary's crew launched their rigid hull inflatable boat (RHIB) and safely rescued all eight fishermen who had abandoned their sinking vessel.

In sports news...

San Diego gave linebacker Junior Seau's agent permission to talk with other clubs, the San Diego Union-Tribune reported Friday. As a result, Seau said Thursday that he played his last game in a Chargers uniform, and that if a deal with other NFL clubs doesn't turn up, he expects to be released. While there was no clear reason why the Chargers are allowing Seau to negotiate with other teams, Schottenheimer said it was an organizational move, and one that was difficult to deliver.

Last week, Navy hospital ship USNS Comfort added approximately 800 sailors to the crew who have been on the ship since its departure from Baltimore Jan. 6. The addition brings Comfort to its full operating status, and is now able to care for 1,000 patients at a time.

The process spanned over three days with a total of six groups making the trip from the states to Bahrain. The first of six groups made it to the ship around midnight March 7. The last group came aboard March 10.

Although the trip took about 24 hours and spanned eight time zones, most of the sailors have already adjusted to the time change. However, newer sailors also have to adjust to ship life.

For some, this will be the first time they have ever set foot on a ship for some of the new crew. "This is my first time to ever be on a ship, but so far I like being out here and being able to get to do my job," said HN Sarah Wilson who is working in the medical ward.

Hospital Corpsman Shawn Pattisonball has been in the Navy for eight months and agrees with Wilson. "I am working nights, so the time change actually helped me. I have also adjusted quickly to the different living conditions, and I don't mind being out here."

The new crew includes rates from hospital corpsman to ship serviceman. For some of these rates, being out on the ship is sometimes the only way they can get proper job training. "As a ship serviceman, being on a ship is where we do our job most effectively," said SHSN Shakieta Wadsworth, who works in ship's laundry. "On the ship, I can train in my job to help me advance, and I am really excited about that."

Exciting or not, finding your way around the ship can be a frustrating experience. "There are a lot of spaces, and it is easy to get lost, but I just walk around and eventually I will get to where I need to be," said Wadsworth. "But don't worry! I am slowly getting the hang of it."

Even though most of Comfort's crew comes from NNMCMC, there is still a wide range of diversity among the crew. Wadsworth says she enjoys the fact there is a lot of di-



The first augment group makes their way onboard USNS Comfort early Friday morning. For some of the crew, this is their first experience at sea.

versity. She says it helps build teamwork and helps learn about fellow shipmates.

Although a good portion of the augment crew is new to Comfort and the Navy, there are some crewmembers who have already been on the ship. Hospital Corpsman Heather Normand has been on Comfort many times including dock trials and last summers Baltic Challenge. She says you can definitely tell there are new people onboard. "They just have that deer in the headlights look."

Normand also offered some advice for the new sailors onboard. "Make the best of the time you have out here. There are a lot of opportunities for people to volunteer and become a better sailor. I believe some sailors will get back to Bethesda a better sailor than they were before they came to the ship."

Now, most of the new crew is getting acquainted with the ship quite well, thanks to the help of their fellow shipmates. However, with any new experience it takes time.

So, next time you see someone who looks lost, be a shipmate and help them find their sea legs.

Photo by JO2 Ellen Maurer

Kicking the Habit:

Smoking cessation class helps smokers quit

By JOSH ERICA MATER
COMFORT Public Affairs

Mark Twain once said, "Quitting smoking is easy. I've done it a thousand times." So, How many times have you tried to quit?

Trying to quit smoking can be a difficult undertaking. There is the psychological dependence, the habit, and lastly the addiction. All of these combined, make quitting a task, that, for some, may be just too hard to do.

However, there are an increasing number of programs and medicines that can help smokers kick the habit. One such program is smoking cessation (stopping smoking). For the Navy, each command is required to hold the class annually. *Comfort* held a smoking cessation class Mar 1-7 for those who were interested in quitting.

CDR James Fraley, NC, was one of the facilitators for the course given on *Comfort*. He says the program is great way for smokers to get the support they may need to quit.

"On the ship, where stress can be a determining factor for smoking, smokers need support from their fellow shipmates. When they go through

the class, there are other people in the class, and that allows them the opportunity to seek support from each other," says Fraley, who is a family nurse practitioner in sickbay.

The surgeon general says, "Smoking cessation represents the single most important step that smokers can take to enhance the length and quality of their lives."

Smokers often ask, "Tell me how to quit, not why." Smoking cessation classes take care of both.

The class is held over a seven-day period with four classes every other day. The classes cover everything from the why to the how, including helping the smoker decide a plan of action and setting a quit date.

Comfort's Health Promotions Director HMC Seconda Hollinger says the program will take you through the quitting process step by step.

"Smoking cessation is a great class. It teaches you about smoking and nicotine and the health effects of smoking. This class informs you, and an educated crewmember is a healthier crewmember," says Hollinger.

She also says the class shows you ways you can quit. There are



patches, gums, inhalers, and many other ways to help ease the quitting process for smokers.

However, quitting is not just a seven-day process. The classes are designed to educate you and get you started on your way to a smoke-free lifestyle. Fraley says, the most important thing after you quit is staying quit.

"If you fall off the wagon, it doesn't mean you can't get back on. The goal is to keep smoke free," Fraley said.

Becoming smoke free is not only an accomplishment; it affects every aspect of your life. From the smell of your clothes, to the color of your fingernails, to being socially accepted by your peers, the benefits of being a non-smoker are far-reaching. Taking a smoking cessation class can help you get there.

Under Secretary of the Navy bids farewell

By the Honorable Susan M. Livingstone
Under Secretary of the Navy

Today, I step down as your Under Secretary of the Navy. It has been the greatest honor and privilege of my life to serve with each of you since assuming the post in July 2001.

During my time with you, I met exceptional people, from our family members to those who wear the nation's cloth to our naval civilians. These people, just a fraction of the greater whole, represented all of you so very well. In their courage, commitment, integrity, and selfless service to our nation, they confirmed our shared values that make us the Navy-Marine Corps team.

Being part of that team -- that family -- is something I will treasure always.

Your noble choice to serve our nation has rightfully earned you the respect, admiration and confidence of your fellow countrymen.

You represent what is best about America and inspire all of us to preserve what is right and good for future generations.

erations.

Today you face special challenges and hardship, but together, the team -- the family -- will prevail. I have seen and I know that you are trained ... you are ready ... you are dedicated and smart ... you believe in what you do. Together, the Navy and Marine Corps form the most magnificent fighting force and partnership in history, and I am so very proud of each and every one of you. Shortly after Sept. 11, 2001, a fourth-grade girl described patriotism as taking care of America. This definition fits well for what each of you are doing today, and I thank all of you and your families for your patriotism and for taking care of America.

I am leaving my position today, but the Navy-Marine Corps team will be in my heart and soul forever. Thank you for this gift of being part of your naval family.

Thank you for the privilege of serving with you. Thank you for choosing to serve our nation and living a life of contribution and consequence.

God bless and protect you always.

Sailors take charge of careers with Task Force EXCEL

By Elizabeth St. John
The Waterline

The Task Force for Excellence through Commitment to Education and Learning (EXCEL) will provide Sailors with better tools to do their jobs, train more effectively and continue their education.

Lt. j.g. Gary Turner, EXCEL Briefing Team, presented Sailors with pertinent information and answered their questions regarding the new program. "The winds of change are already blowing," he said.

According to Turner, Navy training as it is presently is going away. The old way of teaching with an instructor standing behind a podium is quickly disappearing. The future of Navy training will rely heavily on web-based applications.

Turner emphasized because of Task Force EXCEL, Sailors will need to be increasingly more proactive and responsible for mapping out their careers. "You're going to have to learn a lot on your own," he stated.

The Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Vern Clark, envisioned the idea for a revolution in Navy training. Pilot programs are already underway for the Mess Specialist, Information Technology and Master at Arms ratings.

Task Force EXCEL uses a model called the Sailor Continuum, which will identify the knowledge, skills and abilities of the individual Sailor. The Sailor Continuum (also known as a "Career Roadmap") is broken into five different vectors: professional development, personal development, leadership, certifications/qualifications and performance.

Every step forward along each vector will be a step closer to the next highest pay grade. Sailors will be evaluated on a continuous basis along the way and those evaluations will be more performance-based. "The new system is behaviorally-anchored," Turner commented.

According to Turner, thirteen separate learning centers form the core of Task Force EXCEL. The learning centers are grouped together by rate. The centers will track a Sailor's personal and professional growth and inform the Sailors of all opportunities available to them.

"The Navy will be a recognized training organization," stated Turner. He added that the goal of Task Force EXCEL is to make the Navy one of the top 100 companies in America to work for. To help make that possible, Turner said the Navy would closely correlate its training to private sector standards. He also added, with Task Force EXCEL, Sailors must be more competitive. "We will have more Sailors trying to get in the Navy than get out."

The good news, according to Turner, is Sailors will be provided with more tools to help them compete. "You'll have more opportunity to learn more and do more. That's the bright side," commented Turner.

With Task Force EXCEL, training and education will be more streamlined, resulting in less time a Sailor spends away from the work center or command. "We've got to make all training count," stated Turner.

For more information on Task Force EXCEL, visit www.excel.navy.mil.

Chaplain's Corner:

First Time At Sea

By Chaplain (LCDR) Mark Koczak

I remember my first time at sea. Just like it was yesterday. My friend, a fellow chaplain,

Was transferred to a cruiser and he invited me on a day cruise. It was great. We only went off shore for about 10 hours.

Well, shipmates, that was sixteen years ago. I have been out to sea a few times since then. Three years on a carrier, three years on USCG cutters in Alaska and now here with you on COMFORT. It is still great. The thrill of going out to sea, weighing anchor and feeling free, does not go away with time. It is still new and always different each time.

So what do we do now? For those of us with experience at sea, either on gray hauls or on the white haul, we should know what to do. Spend time each and every day on the decks.

Do not only go to your rack, to chow and to work. Life can be boring on the ship, do not make it so yourself. The sea is always different, as is the sky, the clouds, and even the wind. I walk the decks everyday, to see and talk to you all of course, that is my job, but also for my self. I love being at sea.

At night, look up! That may be simple but many do not do that. The dark night full of stars and the glorious moon right now. So bright, shadows are cast on the deck. It is a Glorious and every changing site.

There is plenty, and I really mean plenty, of things to do onboard COMFORT. Take advantage. Read, many of you will see me look at the books that you are reading. I am also the ship's librarian. Go to the gym, walk the decks for exercise. Yes it is easy to gain weight here. It is simple to loose it.

Welcome to our new shipmates. Let us all spend time, right now, getting to know each other. We now are all the crew of COMFORT. And especially welcome to all of you who are spending their first days at sea. Isn't it great?

A Special Thanks!



Photo by JOSH ERICA MATER
CDR Donald Bennett, MC, (Left) takes a piece of lemon meringue pie from Joe Shepherd. Bennett operated on Shepherd Feb. 23 to remove a small bowel obstruction. Shepherd is a civilian cook with the Military Sealift Command aboard *Comfort*. Shepherd baked the pies for Bennett and his staff as a token of his appreciation.

Comfort Campaigns for NMCRS

It is time once again for the annual Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society Fund Drive. The drive started Mar 3 and will run through April 11.

The mission of NMCRS is to provide, in partnership with the Navy and Marine Corps, financial, educational, and other assistance to members of the Naval Services of the United States, eligible family members, and survivors when in need.

Comfort will be running a campaign that is concurrent with the campaign at National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda. Comfort's LCDR Wilson Knight, chairperson for Comfort's campaign, says we can still contribute to the fund.

"We have a lot of people deployed right now, and those sailors need to know their families have a resource back home with NMCRS," said Knight. The NMCRS is there to help deployed sailors' families during this difficult time of separation.

If you would like to contribute or find out more information about NMCRS you may contact LCDR Knight at 7268 to find out who is the key person in your division.

**Your
Picture
Here**

Got Sea Stories?

Have you ever had a great SEA story you just had to share with everyone? Well, here is your chance to tell us about it. Starting next week, there is going to be a column dedicated to you and your story. The column will feature your accounts AT SEA as well as your picture. However, before you start sharpening your pencils there are a few guidelines that you must follow in order to stake your claim to fame.

- ☐ No profane material will be published. This includes offensive language, sexual innuendos, and negative comments with regard to race or gender.
- ☐ Stories should be no more than 1 full page.
- ☐ We are looking for all types of SEA STORIES. However, we would like stories that are inspirational, motivating, and humorous.
- ☐ Stories must include your name, division, and contact info. Also, include a title for your story.
- ☐ Open to all hands. We encourage EVERYONE to submit stories.
- ☐ ALL stories are subject to editing by the public affairs office. If your story is chosen, you will be asked to help with the editing process.
- ☐ We will review stories on a weekly basis and pick one for publication for that week.
- ☐ Please submit stories in writing to the journalism department in Admin via e-mail or in person. If you have any questions, please contact JOSH ERICA MATER or HM3 David Ruane at ext. 7220.

Even though we would like to see as much participation as possible, there will be many stories that do not get published. PLEASE do not get discouraged by this, and continue to submit your stories each week.

This column is for you. Now is your chance to share your Navy experience with others. Who knows, you may even make a lasting impact on your fellow shipmate.